

In The Claims:

1-43. (Cancelled)

44. (Currently Amended) A functional element attachable to a panel in a fluid tight manner, comprising:

a shaft part having a shaft diameter defining a shaft axis;

a head part axially aligned with said shaft part; and

wherein said head part includes an annular wall having an inner surface and an outer surface having a diameter generally equal to said shaft diameter and having a distal end tapered radially inwardly defining an opening having less than a diameter of said inner surface ~~off~~ of said annular wall.

45. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, wherein said distal end defines a generally rounded surface thereby providing a smooth interaction with the panel.

46. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, wherein said annular wall of said head part is deformable radially outwardly thereby forming first and second annular bulges spaced upon opposite sides of the panel.

47. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, wherein said opening defines an opening wall tapering conically inwardly toward said shaft portion.

48. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 47, wherein said annular wall tapers radially inwardly between generally 30° and 40°.

49. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 47, wherein said annular wall tapers radially inwardly between generally 45° and 90°.

50. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, wherein said shaft defines a bolt element.

51. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, in the form of a nut element.

52. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, comprising a tube section high pressure formed into said head part and said shaft part.

53. (Previously Presented) A functional element according to claim 44, comprising at least one of a tube section, wire material, and bar stock cold formed into said head part and said shaft part.

54. (Previously Presented) A functional element and panel assembly forming a fluid tight seal, said assembly comprising:

a panel having a pot-like recess merging via a radially inwardly projecting ring fold into a planar portion of said panel and a functional element, said functional element comprising

a shaft part having a shaft diameter defining a shaft axis;

a head part axially aligned with said shaft part; and

wherein said head part includes an annular wall deformably compressed thereby forming a first generally annular bulge and second generally annular bulge sandwiching at least said ring fold of said panel with said first generally annular bulge received in said pot-like recess thereby securing said functional element to said panel.

55. (Previously Presented) The assembly as set forth in claim 54, wherein said panel forms a continuous sheet surrounding said head part of said functional element.

56. (Previously Presented) The assembly as set forth in claim 54, wherein said head part includes a distal end deformed inwardly toward said shaft part thereby defining a generally concave shape.

57. (Previously Presented) The assembly as set forth in claim 54, wherein said first generally annular bulge is disposed in a plane generally equal to a plane defined by said panel.

58. (Previously Presented) The assembly as set forth in claim 54, wherein said first generally annular bulge and said second generally annular bulge define an annular slot and said ring fold of said panel is present radially inside said annular slot.